

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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SUBJECT: HOKKAIDO REACTIONS TO JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY NEGOTIATIONS

1. SUMMARY: AGREEMENT ON INTERIM JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY ACCORD EASED POTENTIAL CRISIS IN NATIONALLY-IMPORTANT HOKKAIDO FISHING INDUSTRY. CLOSURE OF VITAL FISHING GROUNDS IN SOVIET 200-MILE ZONE APRIL 1 HAD DEALT SEVERE BLOW TO HOKKAIDO FISHERMEN AND RELATED INDUSTRIES. DESPITE MOUNTING FINANCIAL LOSSES, HOKKAIDO FISHING INTERESTS BACKED GOJ STAND ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE AT RISK OF INDEFINITE STALEMATE IN NEGOTIATIONS AND EXCLUSION FROM SOVIET ZONE. RECENT AGREEMENT EXPECTED TO PERMIT RESUMPTION OF JAPANESE FISHING IN ZONE, BUT PROSPECTS FOR RECOVERY OF HOKKAIDO FISHING INDUSTRY WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON SEVERITY OF SOVIET-IMPOSED QUOTA RESTRICTIONS. END SUMMARY

2. CLOSURE OF VITAL FISHING GROUNDS IN SOVIET 200-MILE ZONE TO JAPANESE BOATS APRIL 1 FOLLOWING DEADLOCK IN JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY NEGOTIATIONS DEALT HEAVY BLOW TO HOKKAIDO FISHING INDUSTRY. ISLAND'S FISHERMEN SUPPLY ONE FOURTH (2.5 MILLION TONS) OF JAPAN'S TOTAL ANNUAL CATCH, AND OBTAIN 45 PERCENT (1.2 MILLION TONS) OF THIS AMOUNT FROM RUSSIAN COASTAL WATERS. CLOSURE IDLED
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ABOUT 2,000 BOATS, INCLUDING SALMON FLEET, AND RESULTED IN SHARP REDUCTION IN CATCH OF SUCH KEY COMMERCIAL SPECIES AS POLLACK AND HERRING. ESTIMATED LOSS IN APRIL ALONE TOTALLED 100,000 TONS, MAINLY POLLACK WHICH IS PRINCIPAL CATCH IN SOVIET WATERS AND MAINSTAY OF HOKKAIDO FISH PROCESSING INDUSTRY.

3. ECONOMIC DAMAGE FROM CLOSURE HAS BEEN MOST SEVERE IN HOKKAIDO'S

12 PRINCIPAL FISHING PORTS WHERE RISING PRICES AND SHORTAGES OF FISH FORCED ABOUT HALF OF ISLAND'S 2,000 FISH PROCESSING PLANTS TO SUSPEND OR CURTAIL OPERATIONS. EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID, FROM PREFECTURAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDED SOME CUSHION FOR IDLED BOAT OWNERS AND PROCESSING FIRMS. BUT INCREASING LAYOFFS IN FISHERY-RELATED INDUSTRIES AND STAGNATION OF LOCAL BUSINESS ACTIVITY INTENSIFIED DIFFICULTIES OF FINANCIALLY HARD-PRESSED CITY GOVERNMENTS. RIPPLE EFFECTS HAVE ALSO BEGUN TO IMPACT ADVERSELY ON NATIONAL FISH SUPPLIES AND PRICES AND \$19 BILLION HOKKAIDO ECONOMY IN WHICH FISHING INDUSTRY PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE.

4. DESPITE REALIZATION THAT HOKKAIDO ECONOMIC INTERESTS INCREASINGLY IMPERILED BY STALEMATED JAPAN-SOVIET FISHERY NEGOTIATIONS, ISLAND'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING THAT OF FISHERMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, UNANIMOUSLY BACKED GOJ STAND ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE. PRIOR TO START OF FIRST ROUND OF ISHKOV-SUZUKI NEGOTIATIONS IN MID-MARCH, PRESS REPORTS INDICATED SOME FISHERMEN PREPARED TO URGE CONCESSIONS ON THIS ISSUE IN RETURN FOR CONTINUED ACCESS TO SOVIET ZONE. BUT DURING COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS, EMERGENCE OF UNPRECEDENT NATIONAL CONSENSUS IN SUPPORT OF GOJ POSITION AND IRRITATION WITH SOVIET NEGOTIATING TACTICS COMBINED TO SILENCE OVERT EXPRESSION OF SUCH VIEWS IN HOKKAIDO.

5. INTERIM FISHERY AGREEMENT TO BE SIGNED THIS WEEK IS EXPECTED TO PERMIT DEPARTURE WITHIN SEVERAL DAYS OF SALMON FLEET ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO BEGIN FISHING IN NORTHWEST PACIFIC APRIL 30. DELAY HAS RESULTED IN LOSS OF BEST PART OF SEASON, AND MANY BOATS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CATCH ALLOTMENTS UNDER 62,000 TON QUOTA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SET BY SOVIETS FOR WATERS OUTSIDE 200-MILE ZONE. HOKKAIDO OFF-SHORE AND PELAGIC FISHERMEN ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT AS YET UNDISCLOSED SOVIET QUOTA RESTRICTIONS ON JAPANESE FISHING WITHIN ZONE. RUSSIAN DEMANDS FOR SHARP CUTBACK IN JAPANESE CATCH OF POLLACK AND OTHER SPECIES ARE ANTICIPATED, AND HOKKAIDO FISHERMEN CONSIDER SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION OF FISHING FLEET LIKELY.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH RELIEVED BY AGREEMENT ON INTERIM ACCORD, HOKKAIDO FISHING INTERESTS REGARD DISCUSSIONS ON CATCH QUOTAS TO MARK BEGINNING OF "REAL NEGOTIATIONS" WITH SOVIETS. COURSE OF JAPAN-SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS SO FAR HAS CONFIRMED MOST PESSIMISTIC PREDICTIONS OF SOVIET INTENTIONS, AND LONG-STANDING DISLIKE OF RUSSIANS IN HOKKAIDO HAS BEEN REINFORCED.

7. DESPITE SOME GRUMBLING IN FISHING PORTS AGAINST "WEAKNESS" OF GOJ'S FISHERY DIPLOMACY, IT HAS EMERGED FROM RECENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH ENHANCED PRESTIGE AMONG FISHERMEN AND GENERAL PUBLIC. MAN IN STREET DISPLAYED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN NEGOTIATIONS, BUT AS WAS CASE DURING LAST YEAR'S U.S.-JAPAN FISHERY NEGOTIA-

TIONS, INTENSE CONCERN WAS CONFINED MAINLY TO FISHERMEN WHOSE ECONOMIC INTERESTS WERE MOST DIRECTLY AFFECTED. FINALLY, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT, IN CONTRAST TO SOVIET PERFORMANCE, PEOPLE HERE RETROSPECTIVELY VIEW USG NEGOTIATING STYLE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF FISHERIES CONSERVATION ZONE AS FAR MORE REASONABLE AND OBVIOUSLY MORE RESPONSIVE TO JAPANESE NEEDS.
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